should be a medically fit Central/State Government employee, not more than 45 years of age as on 1st January of the year of Haj, holding a non-gazetted post not below the grade of Upper Division Clerk of Central Government or equivalent. Preference is given to applicants having knowledge of regional languages and experience in public relations.

(b) The number of Haj Assistants deputed during 1999 to 2001 are as follows:—

| Year | Number of Haj Assistants |
|---|---|
| 1999 | 106 |
| 2000 | 125 |
| 2001 | 116 |

For the Haj 2002,125 'Haj Assistants' are proposed to be deputed.

(c) Marginal increase as compared to last year has been proposed.

(d) No, Madam.

(e) Question does not arise.

**China's desire to join SAARC**

4190. SHRI CM IBRAHIM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has again expressed its desire to join the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); and

(b) if so, what is Government's response thereto by way of sponsoring or supporting China's entry into SAARC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

**Indo-Malaysian Agreement**

4191. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH:
SHRI CM IBRAHIM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Malaysia have signed seven agreements during the recent visit of Prime Minister to that country;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what steps have been taken to ensure that the indigenous industries are not affected by lowering the import duty on palm oil from Malaysia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir. Two Agreements and five MOUs were signed between Government of Republic of India and the Government of Malaysia during Prime Minister's visit to Malaysia.

(b) Agreements:

1. Agreement between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Republic of India on Exemption of the Visa Requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports.

2. Agreement between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Republic of India for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect of Taxes on Income.

MOUs

1. Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Republic of India on Mutual Cooperation relating to Investment, Construction, Privatization and Management of Seaports in India.

2 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Republic of India on the Cooperation on Information Technology and Services.

3. Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Republic of India on Cooperation in the field of Civil Service, Personnel Management and Public Administration.

4. Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Malaysia (Ministry of Transport) and IRCON International Ltd. For Double Tracking of Ipoh-Padang Besar Section KTM Line.

5. Memorandum of Understanding between Securities Commission of Malaysia and the Securities and Exchange Board of India in relation to Assistance and Mutual Cooperation.

(c) As of date there is no lowering of import duty on crude palm oil.